

AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

JERUSALEM AND BAGHDAD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

Confidential

Not for publication

Newsletter #1

1956-57

Jerusalem - September 3, 1956.

After sweltering through what is said to have been the hottest spell since 1892 with the hostel full of guests, the School has now settled down to the annual lull between the summer's activities and the beginning of the autumn term. No one now remains but the Director, the Annual Professor, their respective families, and Prof. G. E. Wright. All is peaceful within the School and the return of cool weather is expected almost daily, but the Director at least feels very much like a hen suddenly bereaved of her chicks!

This has been the busiest summer, archaeologically speaking, that Jerusalem has known in many years and the majority of our guests has been drawn from the members of the various digs which have been operating in the vicinity. But before speaking of these it will perhaps be in order first to give the news about the permanent members of the staff and the more transient visitors who have come to us for personal reasons of study or travel and whose stay has lasted from two or three days to several weeks. The Director and his wife arrived on June 22 and were glad to have a few days of quiet settling down and of conferences with Monsignor Skehan before the responsibilities of office descended upon them. Professor H. Neil Richardson, who holds the appointment as Annual Professor for 1956-7, Mrs. Richardson and the three Richardson girls, arrived shortly thereafter. On July 5 Monsignor Skehan took off from Kalandieh airport for a leisurely trip through the Mediterranean and various European countries which was intended to reach its climax with a visit to the Congress for Old Testament Study in Strasbourg late in August. His departure was accompanied by regretful farewells and all good wishes from the members of the native staff of the School and many citizens of Jerusalem. During his two years here he succeeded in making a deep impression, by his friendliness and his meticulous devotion to the duties of his position, both upon the School and upon academic and ecclesiastical circles in the city. For the last few days of his stay here, the School had the pleasure of entertaining Monsignor Higgins, his friend and colleague (Prof. of Byzantine History), at the Catholic University, whose energetic and colorful personality contributed much to the pleasure of life within the School.

There is not sufficient space to mention all the visitors who have been with us through the summer, but a few notes will at least indicate how busy and varied life at the School has been: Prof. F.L. Cross has been making his headquarters at the School since early spring while pursuing his work on the scrolls at the Palestine Museum. He was forced to return to Chicago a few days before he had planned be-

cause of the sudden illness of his wife, but all of us were happy to learn from a telegram which has just arrived that all has turned out for the best. For the first half of the summer Dr. Thorir Thordarson, of the University of Iceland, accompanied by his wife, was both a visitor and an officially registered student at the School, traveling, working in the library and Museum, and for a week assisting at the El-Jib excavation. We have also had more or less extended visits from Pres. and Mrs. Ross Griffeth of Northwestern Christian College at Eugene, Oregon, Dr. Carl Gordon Howie of the Sherwood Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., who was doing some research for a book on the Scrolls, and Prof. P. L. Garber of Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Ga. Since these visitors and most others who come to us have had a natural and enthusiastic desire to see the caves and excavations at Qumran, the road from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea has been almost feverishly busy and our local authorities on the subject, particularly Prof. Cross and Mr. Strugnell, from the museum, have been in constant demand as guides. Our most recent visitors, whom we were unfortunately unable to accommodate in the School as in some previous years, are Prof. Martin Noth of Bonn and the study group which he brings through the Near East annually during the summer. They have been making good use of the School library and we had the pleasure of their company at Sunday night dinner in the Director's House Sept. 2.

Four archaeological "digs" were originally projected for Jordan this spring and summer, Diban, El-Jib, Balata and Beitin, but of these Prof. Kelso's at Beitin had to be cancelled or, more accurately, postponed until next season. Dr. Morton's season at Diban was over before I arrived in the country, but I hope to be able to give a report on it in the next news-letter. The most ambitious of the three which were actually carried through was Prof. Pritchard's at El-Jib which extended over a full ten-week period from June to late August. Both Prof. Richardson and I had the good fortune to take part in it, Prof. Richardson for four weeks in July (after which he went to Egypt to assist in the supervision of an Ecumenical work-camp at Ghizeh) and I for the last five weeks of the expedition. The dig at Jib was a joint project of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, at Berkeley, Calif., the Pennsylvania Museum and the American Schools. Prof. Pritchard, of C.D.S.P. was the director and Dean Sherman Johnson of the same institution his chief assistant. It was one of the regrets of our summer in Jerusalem that it was impossible for us to accommodate Dean Johnson and his family at the School, but since they were living across the street at the National Hotel we saw them constantly and had them as regular visitors for Sunday night dinner so we really counted them as members of our School community. All of the Johnsons except young David were active members of the Jib expedition, Miss Marcia Rogers being the official and most efficient architect, and Mrs. Johnson being constantly engaged either in active work on the tell or classification and research in the School basement. Mr. Hartley Hall, now a senior at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., was Jim Pritchard's active lieutenant (his military training and consequent aptitude at getting results justify the use of the term in an almost literal sense) and also, of course, a most welcome member of the School family for the whole summer.

The incidental and unexpected difficulties to which an archaeologist may be subjected are well-illustrated by the fact that the publication of the translation of the famous copper scroll appeared on the very day when Dr. Pritchard was to conclude negotiations for the rent of the tell. When he arrived at El Jib to sign the papers, the Mukhtar of the village appeared waving the morning newspaper and declaring that now he knew why they wanted to dig. The object of the expedition was obviously not buried cities, but buried treasure! Most archaeologists have had to live at least part of their career under a similar cloud, but it is doubtful if there is any other case in which the suspicion has been so plausibly documented.

The tell of El-Jib is one of the largest and most promising in the country and the long-disputed identification of the site with ancient Gibeon makes it especially intriguing. The expedition explored three widely-separated areas, at the SW, NW and NE (directions only approximate) corners of the mound. Nothing spectacular was found at the first two points. The SW area produced an early city wall and a number of domestic buildings, while the NW area was the least productive of the three showing only some walls (Iron I period) whose use could not be determined, together with three grain pits. At the very bottom of this section clear evidence of Middle Bronze occupancy was noted, but through an unfortunate accident (the unauthorized filling of one of the holes over a week-end by too-eager native workmen) it was impossible to pursue these traces further. No evidence of Late Bronze occupation appeared at any point on the tell.

In contrast to the SW and NW areas, the one to the NE proved spectacular beyond all reasonable hopes. Here, the great Iron II city wall appeared just under the surface of the soil, with considerable evidence of Early Bronze occupation on the outside, but three other discoveries dwarfed this almost into insignificance. The first was the clearing of the tunnel which leads from the top of the tell to the spring (which is still the main source of the El Jib's water-supply) at the bottom. The existence of this tunnel had long been known and tentative entrance into it had been effected by Père Abel many years ago, but this year's expedition discovered the top entrance for the first time and succeeded in clearing out the whole of this remarkable architectural achievement of antiquity, with its nearly a hundred steps, all cut through solid rock. Of even greater importance was the discovery of the great "pool of Gibeon" (II Sam. 2 :13), an enormous rock-cut hole with a spiral stair-case which proved to be so deep that even five-weeks of digging, reaching a depth of over 10 meters, were insufficient to reach its bottom. The source of its water-supply is as yet undetermined (it can hardly be a cistern). Fortunately, although the rest of the excavations have now been filled in (except for the tunnel, which is, however, closed to public view), the pool has been left open and surrounded by a sturdy fence. This means that future visitors to Palestine will be able to see it and that some future season of work may provide an opportunity of reaching the bottom and solving the mystery of its water-supply. A local legend has already risen at El-Jib which declares that at the bottom there lie seven kings with their spears at their sides--and after all, who knows!

This brief report on the discoveries at Jib must close with mere mention of what is actually the most striking find of all: three jar handles, two complete and one broken, which bear the name "Gibeon", in 8th century characters. All were found in the rubble which filled the pool. Even for the most skeptical the dossier in support of the identification of Gibeon and El-Jib would now seem to be complete! Other stamped and inscribed jar-handles were of course found.

In the next News-Letter I hope to give brief reports on the results of the excavations at Diban and Balata. Prof. Wright, the director of the Balata dig expects to remain at the School until about the end of this month, completing his records (assisted by the Richardson family) and engaging in a research project.

Robert C. Dentan, Director

REPORT FROM DHIBAN

The American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Jordan has just completed its 1956 campaign of excavation at the ancient Moabite royal city of Dhiban east of the Dead Sea. On this site was found, in 1868, the famous Moabite Stone, which gave an account, in alphabetic characters of the 9th century B.C., of political difficulties between Moab and ancient Israel -- supplementing the account in the Old Testament Book of Kings. This season's work marked the fifth yearly campaign of the expedition -- the last two campaigns being joint projects of the American Schools of Oriental Research and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

In each of the two areas excavated this season, rather striking results were obtained. In one area the northern entranceway to the city was laid bare revealing three successive roadways of packed huwar leading through huge corner towers with guard rooms up into the city. This entranceway saw service during various periods of the city's history from 3,000 B.C. to A.D. 500, the period of greatest usage being from the 10th to the 8th centuries B.C. Adjacent to this entranceway were found huge grain bins for storage of one of Moab's principal commodities. In close association with these bins, destruction levels produced considerable quantities of charred grain some 3,000 years old and in an excellent state of preservation. Moabite city walls of both brick and stone were encountered, one of the latter remaining standing to a height of some fourteen feet and another, more ancient, was shattered and blackened by the intense heat of a destructive fire.

The second area investigated was on the summit and center of the site. Chief interest here focused upon the foundations and lower superstructure of a Moabite official building of imposing but yet undetermined proportions. Its walls, averaging from $4\frac{1}{2}$ - 5 feet in thickness

continue in all four major directions beyond the area cleared in two official seasons of excavation. The floors were of undressed flat stones covered with a plaster of packed huwar. In a small central room was found a rather remarkable incense stand and two adjacent rooms each produced fertility figurines. The interior plan of the structure plus the nature of the finds recovered make it practically certain that this building was a Moabite temple or palace-temple combination. Its interest stems not only from its size and the nature of its construction, but also, since it is the only such Moabite structure ever recovered, it will be of very considerable importance for students of the Old Testament and for those concerned with the history of Near Eastern culture.

The "small finds" of the season were hardly less intriguing than the building remains. As usual, the pottery finds were the most numerous of all. Among the Nabataean wares recovered were some exquisite and unusual examples of "rippling", rouletting, and exterior painting. Surprisingly, some of the Moabite pottery from the "temple" area challenges the finest and thinnest ever produced in the ancient world--even by the Nabataeans. Perhaps the object most worthy of mention among the season's finds is a Moabite ostrakon--the first ever to be recovered from the site. Also, of extraordinary interest, are the figurines and the stamped and incised jar handles, one of which is incised with a Moabite kaph and another being stamped with the impression of a man, a horse, and a scorpion."

William H. Morton